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ABSTRACT

The findings of an investigation of both a private and a public school-choice program in San Antonio, Texas, between 1992 and 1996 are evaluated in this report. The private program, sponsored by the Children's Educational Opportunity (CEO) Foundation, provides scholarships to low-income parents to enroll their children in private schools, while the public program, offered by the San Antonio Independent School District, selects students from across the district to study foreign language and culture ("the multicultural program"). The study focuses on five groups of "choosing" families, as well as one group of randomly selected "nonchoosing" families. The choosing families include those whose children: (1) enrolled in the public multilingual program; (2) applied but could not enroll in the multilingual program due to limited enrollment space; (3) already attended private schools and received CEO scholarships; (4) received CEO scholarships and transferred from public to private schools; and (5) already attended private schools, applied and were placed on the waiting list for CEO scholarships. The researchers supplemented survey information from these groups with surveys of teachers, interviews with school administrators, field observations at the nine schools, and reviews of archival records. The report explores the differences between choosing and nonchoosing families; the differences between private school choosers and public school choosers; the satisfaction of parents over time with their choices; factors involved in student attrition from choice programs; the educational impacts of school choice on student achievement; the characteristics of schools as perceived by teachers; and the institutional practice and pedagogy as perceived by students. Some of the findings include the following: relative to nonchoosing families, choosing families are more educated, wealthier, and have fewer children; parents who used the CEO scholarships to move their children from public to private schools were dissatisfied with their prior public schools and are very satisfied with their child's private schools; nonchoosing families are very satisfied with their public schools; and private school teachers have less experience than public school teachers and are less likely

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to hold master's degrees or to be certified. More extensive information is available in research reports, journal articles, and book chapters listed in the bibliography at the end. (JMD)

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ED 425 513

University of North Texas

FINAL REPORT
SAN ANTONIO SCHOOL CHOICE RESEARCH PROJECT

June 1997

Center for the Study of Education Reform
College of Education

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ADVISORY RESEARCH COUNCIL

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Representing the Texas Public Policy Foundation and the CEO Foundation are **Allan Parker** and **Robert Aguirre**; representing the San Antonio Independent School District is **Dr. Julian Trevino**.

Executive Summary

From 1992 to 1996, the Center for the Study of Education Reform at the University of North Texas evaluated both a private and a public school choice program in San Antonio, Texas. The private program, sponsored by the Children's Educational Opportunity (CEO) Foundation, provides scholarships to low income parents to enroll their children in private schools. The public program, offered by the San Antonio Independent School District (SAISD), selects students from across the district to study foreign language and culture (called "the multilingual program"). The study focused on five groups of "choosing" families as well as one group of randomly selected "nonchoosing" families (i.e. SAISD families whose children attended assigned neighborhood schools, also called attendance-zone schools). The choosing families included those whose children: (1) enrolled in the public multilingual program; (2) applied to the multilingual program but could not enroll due to limited enrollment space; (3) already attended private schools and received CEO scholarships; (4) received CEO scholarships and transferred from public to private schools; and (5) already attended private schools, applied and were placed on the waiting list for CEO scholarships. The researchers supplemented survey information from these groups with surveys of teachers, interviews with school administrators, field observations at nine representative schools, and reviews of archival records. Grants from the U.S. Department of Education and private foundations funded the research. The study findings include the following:

1. Relative to nonchoosing parents, choosing parents are more educated, wealthier, more involved in their children's education at home and at school, and hold higher educational expectations for their children's education. They also have fewer children.

2. Children applying to choice programs have higher standardized test scores than nonchoosing students. The test scores of students applying to the SAISD multilingual program are higher than those of students using the CEO scholarship to enroll in private schools. This difference is largely a factor of program design. The CEO program emphasizes giving low-income children private school opportunities while the SAISD multilingual program emphasizes superior academic performance.

3. CEO private school choosers are more likely to be non-Hispanic whites and significantly less likely to be African-Americans than are SAISD public school choosers. Private school choosers also are more religious and more educated but have lower incomes than public choosers. These differences are caused in part by the design of the choice programs.

4. Parents of children who used the CEO scholarship to move from a public to a private school were more involved in their child's education *prior* to the move to a choice school than were public choosing parents. However, participation in choice programs does not increase parental involvement.

5. Parents who used the CEO scholarship to move their children from public to private schools were very dissatisfied with their prior public schools. They are very satisfied with their child's private school.

6. Parents whose children enrolled in the SAISD multilingual program were highly satisfied with their prior public school and remain highly satisfied with the multilingual school. However, the satisfaction levels of parents whose children were not admitted into the multilingual program declines significantly during the study. Further, their involvement in their children's education also declines.

7 Nonchoosing families are very satisfied with their public schools.

8. Among families who used the CEO scholarship to transfer from public to private schools, the student dropout rate over the study period was 49.6%. Major factors were a) inability to get into the private school of first choice, b) insufficient funds, and c) lack of transportation. Catholic students and students whose parents attended church more frequently were significantly less like to drop out of the CEO program.

9. Approximately one-third of the students who entered the SAISD multilingual choice program dropped out during the study period. Three factors predict which students will remain more than one year in the program: a) the student participated in the decision process to apply and enroll in the program, b) the student's best friend attends the same middle school, and c) the student has high scores on the standardized math test.

10. For reasons outlined in this report, comparisons between public and private school students regarding student achievement are exceedingly difficult. While students in both the SAISD multilingual program and private schools show marginal improvements in standardized readings scores and marginal declines in math, their test score results are not substantively significant unless compared with the substantial drop in test scores for students in SAISD attendance-zone schools. The students who fare worst are those who applied to the multilingual program but could not enroll.

11. Private school teachers are less likely than public school teachers to hold master's degrees or to be certified. Private school teachers also have less teaching experience and are less likely to be from minority ethnic groups than their public school counterparts.

12. The attitudes of private and public school teachers are generally similar with regard to their schools, but private school teachers are more likely to view their schools as conducive to learning. Teachers at attendance-zone middle schools are the least likely to find the school environment conducive to student achievement, the least likely to have contact with parents, and the most likely to indicate student discipline is a problem.

13. Teachers at private and public choice middle schools assign more homework and have higher expectations for student performance than their counterparts at attendance-zone public schools.

14. Students at choice schools have more favorable attitudes toward their schools than do students at attendance-zone public schools. Students at attendance-zone schools are more likely to feel fighting is a problem at their school and less likely to feel school rules are fair.

15. According to students, the values addressed in the instructional program at private, public choice, and public attendance-zone schools differ little, with the exception of religion. Religion is identified as the value receiving the most emphasis at private schools and the least emphasis at public schools. Civic values are reportedly addressed as frequently in private schools as in public schools.

Final Report:
Results of the San Antonio School Choice Research Project

This report presents the findings from a four-year comprehensive study of public and private school choice in San Antonio, Texas. The report examines:

- Differences between choosing and non-choosing families
- Differences between private school choosers and public school choosers
- Satisfaction of parents over time with their choices
- Factors involved in student attrition from choice programs
- Educational impacts of school choice on student achievement
- Characteristics of schools as perceived by teachers
- Institutional practice and pedagogy as perceived by students

San Antonio is an ideal site for investigating the consequences of school choice, especially for low-income, minority families. More than 70 percent of San Antonio urban school children are Hispanic and approximately 85 percent are from minority ethnic groups (Partnership for Hope, 1991). Given that Hispanics have the highest school drop-out rate in the nation and a poverty level that surpasses that of African Americans, this study has significant implications for this population group (Goldberg 1997). In 1991, an estimated 18 percent of low-income families residing in the San Antonio Independent School District (SAISD) sent their children to private schools, while an additional 2 percent participated in the district's thematic choice program called "the multilingual program." In Fall 1992, the Children's Educational Opportunity (CEO) Foundation increased the availability of private-school choice for low-income families by providing partial scholarships to children in San Antonio and throughout Bexar County.

With the full cooperation of SAISD and the CEO Foundation, we began a comprehensive evaluation of school choice in San Antonio in August 1992. Our first report, *Who Chooses and Why*, provides a baseline demographic profile of choosing and nonchoosing families. The report was issued in June 1993 and is available from the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EA 025 031). Other research reports and published articles and book chapters are listed in the bibliography.

Start-up funding in the amount of $40,000 was obtained in 1992 from the USA Foundation, the Ewing Halsell Foundation, and the Covenant Foundation in San Antonio. In 1993, the U.S. Department of Education approved a grant proposal in the amount of $88,640 to continue the research (grant award number R117E30059). Supplemental funding to complete the

study was obtained from the University of North Texas ($13,500) in 1994, the Spencer Foundation of Chicago ($11,000) in 1995, and the Walton Family Foundation ($15,000) in 1996. In addition, the College of Education and the College of Arts and Sciences at the university provided funding for graduate research assistants and partial release time to the principal researchers during portions of the study.

This report presents highlights of findings from the four-year study. More extensive information is available in research reports, journal articles, and book chapters listed in the bibliography.

THE CHOICE PROGRAMS

The Children's Educational Opportunity (CEO) scholarship program, initiated by the Texas Public Policy Foundation in 1992, offers tuition scholarships to low-income families in San Antonio so that they may enroll their children in private or public schools of their choice in Grades 1-8.[1] Only students who qualify for free or reduced lunches under federal financial guidelines are eligible. The scholarships cover half of a school's tuition, with a maximum of $750. While low by private school standards in many parts of the country, the CEO scholarship has real value in San Antonio, where the average elementary school tuition approaches $1,500. The average CEO scholarship is $575.

Contributions from corporations in the San Antonio area underwrite the CEO program. The program is similar to the Educational Choice Charitable Trust scholarship program initiated in Indianapolis by the Golden Rule Insurance Company. The primary difference is that the students served in San Antonio are predominantly Hispanic, whereas the students in the Indianapolis program are primarily Anglos and African Americans.

In the 1992-93 school year, the CEO Foundation provided 936 students with scholarships awarded on a first-come, first-chosen basis. While the CEO program did not screen students for scholarships, individual schools private schools could, and some did, exert some admissions control, particularly at the middle school level. Approximately half of the scholarships went to families whose children attended public school in the previous year. By design, the other half of the scholarships was granted to eligible families whose children already were enrolled in private schools. Of the total enrollees, approximately 60 percent enrolled in Catholic schools, 20 percent in nondenominational religious schools, 10 percent in Baptist schools, 1 percent in non-religious schools, and the remainder in religious schools of various denominations. The scholarship program was and remains heavily oversubscribed. During the duration of this study, there were over 800 students on the waiting list, all of whom were enrolled in private schools.

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[1] No scholarship student was admitted to a public school in the fall of 1992 when the program was implemented. Several students applied as out-of-district students to attend public schools, but the schools already had waiting lists.

SAISD has an enrollment of 61,000 students. In 1992, 81 percent were Hispanic, 12 percent were African American, and 7 percent were Anglo. Approximately 80 percent of the district's students receive free or reduced-price meals. Most of the district lies within the incorporated city limits of San Antonio. SAISD initiated its multilingual choice program in the early 1980s to enhance the district's foreign language offerings. The multilingual program is a continuous seven-year program of foreign language instruction beginning in the sixth grade. Superior academic performance--as evidenced in test scores, grades, and teacher recommendations--determines admission.[2] The multilingual program includes instruction in the same essential elements required in all Texas public school districts, as well as language enrichment through honor classes, accelerated pacing, and individualized instruction. Two middle schools and one high school house the multilingual program. The student population at these schools also includes regularly assigned students from the surrounding neighborhood. Thus students enrolled in the multilingual program take many of their classes with regular students. For the 1992-93 school year, SAISD admitted 675 students to the multilingual program. Another 307 students applied for the program but were not admitted due to enrollment limitations. The presence of this cohort of unsuccessful choosing families provided an excellent control group. SAISD also allowed us to study a second control group of nonchoosing families whose children were assigned to neighborhood schools (identified in this report as "attendance-zone schools").

STUDY METHODOLOGY

We began the collection of baseline data for our comprehensive evaluation of both public and private school choice in the fall of 1992. The four-year study required data from parents/guardians, students, teachers, administrators, and archival records.

Parent/Guardian Data

In August-September 1992, we mailed questionnaires to five groups of choosing families. Those whose children: (1) applied and enrolled in the public multilingual program; (2) applied to the multilingual program but could not enroll due to limited enrollment space; (3) already attended private schools, applied and received CEO scholarships; (4) applied and received CEO scholarships and transferred from public to private schools; and (5) already attended private schools, applied and placed on the waiting list for CEO scholarships. Each mailing contained a paid-reply envelope, as well as English and Spanish versions of the questionnaire, a letter of sponsorship from the director of the CEO program or the superintendent of San Antonio Independent School District as appropriate, and a cover letter

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[2] Our data, as well as our interviews with administrators of the program, indicate that ethnicity also plays a role in admission decisions.

from the researchers. A second mailing and follow-up telephone calls to nonrespondents resulted in an average response rate of 48.5 percent.[3]

In addition, we surveyed by phone a random sample of nonchoosing families (i.e., SAISD families whose children attend attendance-zone schools). Using bilingual interviewers, we obtained a response rate of 40 percent. A demographic comparison of these respondents with SAISD family data and 1990 census data for San Antonio indicates no significant sample bias (Gadberry and Salinas 1994).

The survey instruments asked standard socioeconomic and demographic information, as well as opinions regarding children's past educational experiences, extent of parental involvement with children's education, and importance of education relative to other values and goals. Questionnaires to choice families also elicited information about how families learned of the programs and the factors they considered when making the decision. To maximize comparability with the Milwaukee public voucher evaluation, we used survey instruments adapted from those used by John Witte (1991, 1993).

In January 1994, we interviewed baseline respondents a second time. Following the baseline procedures, nonchoosing families were surveyed by telephone, while the other groups of families were surveyed by mail. The midterm questionnaire was essentially the same as the baseline survey with one page of demographic questions deleted. A monetary incentive of five dollars was offered to all baseline respondents except for the CEO families. Discounting the nonresponses due to incorrect addresses and/or telephone numbers, the total midterm response rate was 64 percent

Eighteen months later (September 1995), we began the process of contacting the families in our panel survey for the last time. We conducted all final surveys by telephone. The questionnaire was the same as the midterm survey with one additional section of questions designed to measure the respondent's level of parental efficacy, integration within the community, institutional trust, and tolerance for others. Two factors greatly hindered our ability to maintain the panel base of participating families. First, the naturally high mobility rate among low-income, inner-city residents resulted in a high number of disconnected or incorrect telephone numbers. Second, a timing conflict with the CEO national organization's survey of families postponed our surveying some CEO families until June 1996. Ultimately, several CEO families refused to participate in our last survey. Discounting the nonresponses due to disconnected or incorrect telephone numbers, the final response rate was 61 percent.

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[3]Although the response rates may seem low, they are higher than average for mail surveys to comparable groups (Marin and Marin 1991). To identify possible sample bias, we compared survey respondents with the total applicant population on key demographic variables and found only two statistically significant differences: Latinos and working mothers are slightly under represented among survey respondents.

While survey methods are commonly employed to obtain data on the variables noted above, focus groups are more appropriate for investigating complex behavior and motivations (Morgan 1993). To better understand the educational decisions of choosing and nonchoosing families, we selected at least ten parents/guardians from each group to participate in separate focus group sessions held in San Antonio in May 1995. We sought the participation of both adults in two-parent families. Each family received 50 dollars for their participation. Conducted in English and/or Spanish, each session lasted approximately 90 minutes.

Student Data

The research team administered written questionnaires to students in grades 6-8 during site visits at nine schools in 1993. With their parents' permission, 1863 students completed questionnaires, approximately 54 percent of those eligible. The schools included the two SAISD multilingual schools, two comparable SAISD attendance-zone schools, and five private schools with the largest number of CEO students enrolled -- three Catholic, one Baptist, and one non-denominational Christian school. Of the 1863 respondents, 945 were from the multilingual schools, 588 from the attendance-zone public middle schools, 234 from the Catholic private schools, and 96 from the non-Catholic private schools. The survey instrument asked questions about school characteristics, school climate, parental involvement, and the character of the instructional program, including the perceived values emphasized in the program. Other questions included student's gender, grade level, ethnicity, and whether the student participated in the multilingual program (SAISD multilingual schools[4]) or in the CEO scholarship program (private schools).

Teacher Data

In Spring 1993 and Fall 1994, we mailed written questionnaires to 1113 teachers at 74 schools -- 34 SAISD public schools and 49 private schools with CEO students enrolled. Forty-six percent of the teachers returned completed surveys. The survey requested information concerning their ethnicity, age, gender, education completed, and teaching experience. It also asked about school mission and goals, administrative style and procedures, discipline policy, teacher autonomy and influence, pedagogical approaches, and nature of parental involvement. Finally, we conducted structured groups interviews with teachers at each of the nine case study schools.

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[4] Half the student population at the two SAISD multilingual choice schools is composed of students assigned from the neighborhood. The other half comprises students selected on a competitive basis from throughout the district to participate in the multilingual program. Thus, the multilingual schools are attendance-zone schools for half their enrollment.

Administrator Data

In August 1992, researchers interviewed those most familiar with the creation and administration of the CEO and multilingual programs. We also surveyed by mail and/or telephone the administrators of the participating schools concerning their testing and admitting procedures. In addition, we interviewed school administrators at each of the nine case study schools during site visits.

Archival Records

We asked SAISD and the private schools to provide nationally normed, standardized test scores for all students included in the study. Requested scores included the year prior to the study (1991-92) and each subsequent year of the study. Obtaining this information proved difficult for several reasons. First, students do not start testing until the third grade. Second, many private schools do not test students annually. Third, some private schools never tested students or discontinued testing after 1993.[5] Finally, SAISD discontinued using a nationally normed test after 1993. This eliminated comparable test scores for SAISD attendance-zone students, multilingual students, and students rejected by the multilingual program.

COMPARING CHOOSING WITH NONCHOOSING FAMILIES

Our research on the results of the first eighteen months of these two programs shows that there are significant differences between choosing and nonchoosing families[6] and between public and private choosing families. Table 1 on page 8 summarizes the differences among the various groups. It shows that choosing families have more years of education, higher income, higher employment, fewer children, a lower probability of being on welfare, a lower probability of being African American, and a higher probability of being a two-parent family. Choosing families also are more religious, place a higher value on ethnic traditions, and have much higher educational expectations for their children. Choosing parents are more active in their child's education both at home and at school. Finally, children who attempted to enroll in choice programs have higher standardized test scores than nonchoosing students.

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[5] Although the CEO program nominally required test-score data, it did not enforce this requirement.

[6] We use the terms "choosers" and "choosing" to designate families either who attempted to place their child in the SAISD multilingual thematic school program or who applied for a CEO scholarship. "Nonchoosers" and "nonchoosing" refers to families who did not attempt to have their child enrolled in either of the programs and who were part of a large random sample of families with students in grades 1-8 at SAISD attendance-zone schools.

When comparing public and private choosing families, we see that private school parents have more education, but lower incomes. Private choosers are significantly more likely to be non-Hispanic whites (Anglos) and significantly less likely to be African Americans. Not surprisingly, private choosing families are significantly more religious. In addition, in the year prior to our study, parents of children who used the CEO scholarship to move from a public to private school were more involved in their child's education than were public choosing parents. However, students using the CEO scholarship have significantly lower test scores and lower family incomes than students who applied to the public choice program. Finally, SAISD public school choosers have more positive evaluations of their past public schools than do CEO parents.

The differences between public and private choosers largely reflect the differences in the program design. The CEO program emphasizes giving low-income children private school opportunities while the SAISD program emphasizes past academic performance and future academic potential.

Table 1. Mean Scores for Demographic Characteristics, Indicators of Family Values, Parental Involvement in Education, and Child's Education for All Choosers, Multilingual Choosers, and Private School Choosers

Variables	Nonchoosers	All Choosers	Public Choosers	Private Choosers
Demographic Characteristics				
Female Parent Education	2.82	4.15**	3.74	4.32**
Male Parent Education	2.89	4.11**	3.81	4.24**
Family Income	4.22	4.53**	4.71	4.45
Female Parent Employment	.35	.48**	.57	.45**
Male Parent Employment	.73	.80**	.80	.80
Receiving Federal Assistance	.35	.15**	.16	.15
Two-Parent Family	.48	.61**	.61	.61
Number of Children	3.51	2.92**	3.00	2.90
Gender of Student	1.38	1.56**	1.65	1.53
Anglo	.03	.14**	.06	.18**
Latino	.62	.71**	.73	.71
African American	.10	.08	.14	.06**
Family Values				
Educational Expectations	3.47	4.43**	4.43	4.43
Importance of Religion	1.58	1.90**	1.80	1.95**
Importance of Ethnic Values	1.50	1.67**	1.60	1.70*
Religious Attendance	2.59	2.13**	2.54	3.03**
Parental Involvement in Education				
Help with Schoolwork	5.43	7.29**	5.23	8.15**
Activity in Child's School	1.85	2.77**	1.98	3.09**
Child's Education				
Child's Test Score	62.10	102.83**	109.60	93.14**
Evaluation of Past School	3.18	3.08**	3.44	2.33**
N	1375	1425	424	1001

** $p < .001$ * $p < .01$

Changes over Time In Satisfaction with Schools

Private School Choosers

A critical factor in the decision to choose a private school is the parents' perception of the quality of public schools. When asked to rate their child's past **public** school, 64 percent of CEO parents assigned a grade of C or worse. In sharp contrast, only 18 percent of SAISD parents assigned grades this low to their child's public school. The critical components of this grade were parents' satisfaction with how much their child learned and the school's safety and discipline. Table 2 shows the evaluations of these factors by CEO parents who moved their child from a public to a private school. The table provides ratings for the year prior to moving their child to a private school, after one year in private school, and after three years in private school.

Table 2: CEO Parents' Rating of Children's Learning and of Discipline in the Schools[a]
(Numbers in percentages)

	Amount Child Learned			School Discipline		
Parents' Rating	1991-92	1992-93	1994-95	1991-92	1992-93	1994-95
Very Satisfied	19	60	41	12	56	41
Satisfied	40	31	51	40	33	54
Dissatisfied	24	5	7	27	8	2
Very Dissatisfied	18	4	6	21	2	2
TOTAL NUMBER	351	326	61	344	327	61

* Question: "How satisfied were you with the following last year?"

[a] Because response rates in the final year of the survey were low, great care should be taken in making generalizations from these data.

When parents used the CEO voucher to move their child from a public to a private school, their satisfaction with both the amount their child learned and with school discipline increased dramatically. Although this satisfaction diminishes slightly by the end of the third year, private school parents' satisfaction remained much higher with their child's private school than with past public schools.

Public School Choosers

Among CEO parents, if the child could not enroll in one school, there typically were other

private school alternatives. This was not the case for families who applied to the multilingual program but were not admitted because of space limitations. Our sample of SAISD choice families included not only 319 families from which at least one child was enrolled in the thematic multilingual program, but also 93 families whose child met the program's qualifications but who were not admitted because of lack of space. We compared these groups with each other and with our random sample of SAISD attendance-zone students.

Parents whose child enrolled in the multilingual program were pleased with their schools. As Table 3 indicates, more than 90 percent of the parents indicated that they were either "satisfied" or "very satisfied" with the amount their child learned in the multilingual program and with the school's discipline. However, Table 3 also shows that the satisfaction level dropped precipitously for parents whose children were eligible for the multilingual program but were not admitted. Among the parents of rejected children, the percentage of those who were "dissatisfied" to "very dissatisfied" with the amount their child learned increased from 13.8 percent to 24.4 percent while dissatisfaction with school discipline jumped from 10.5 percent to 20.6 percent. The scores for other sets of SAISD parents remained essentially unchanged.

Table 3: SAISD Parents' Rating of Children's Learning and of Discipline in the Schools
(Numbers in percentages)

	Amount Child Learned						School Discipline					
	Nonchoosers		Multilingual Enrollees		Multilingual Rejected		Nonchoosers		Multilingual Enrollees		Multilingual Rejected	
Parents' Rating	Year 1	Year 2	Year 1	Year 2	Year 1	Year 2	Year 1	Year 2	Year 1	Year 2	Year 1	Year 2
Very Satisfied	26.7	34.5	54.7	49.6	56.4	31.7	22.5	29.4	50.8	47.9	44.2	30.8
Satisfied	58.3	52.3	42.1	43.8	43.90	29.80	63.3	57.7	41.0	44.6	45.3	48.7
Dissatisfied	12.1	10.3	2.5	5.0	13.8	22.0	9.9	8.4	5.4	3.3	10.5	10.3
Very Dissatisfied	2..9	2.4	0.6	1.7	0	2.4	4.3	4.5	2.9	4.1	0	10.3
TOTAL NUMBER	1346	493	318	121	94	41	1346	493	318	121	94	41

Our focus group interviews showed that many parents whose children were rejected by the multilingual program were bitter about this decision. Some believed that the enrollment criteria were unfair and biased. Parents of students rejected by the public choice program reported not only a substantial drops in their satisfaction with, and involvement in, their child's school, but also a significant decline in their participation in their child's education at home.

Parental Involvement and Participation

Surveys of parents with children in private schools typically show that parents are more satisfied with their child's school and are more involved with their child's education both at home and at school than are parents of students in attendance-zone schools. An important issue in the debate over expanding choice to private schools, however, is whether involved parents become private choosers or whether having a child in a private school increases parental involvement. In September of the first year of the study, we questioned parents concerning their satisfaction and involvement with their child's school during the previous year, and the frequency with which they participated in at-home learning activities. We repeated these questions 18 months later and then again two years after that.

While choosing a private school increases the satisfaction level of choosing parents, Table 4 shows it does not increase their participation levels. CEO parents who moved their child from public to private schools were highly involved in their public schools and remain involved after their child transfers from public to private schools. Compared to nonchoosing parents, choosing parents participated more actively in their child's education at home and continued to be relatively more active after switching their child to a private school. However, moving from a public to a private school does not increase involvement or participation. As a child grows older, whether the child enrolls in a public or private school, both the school involvement and participation in the child's education drop. This decline is greater for private school parents than for public school parents, but the reason for this is the much higher initial involvement of CEO parents.

Table 4: Parents' Involvement and Participation

	Public School Families			CEO Families Whose Child Moved from Public Schools		
	91-92	92-93	95-96	91-92	92-93	95-96
Average School Involvement[1]	2.62	2.84	2.70	4.52	4.43	4.02*
Average Participation at Home[1]	5.53	5.68	4.66*	7.82	7.08*	4.33**
TOTAL NUMBER	1144	398	290	351	207	61

** The change from the previous year's score is statistically significant at the .01 level.
*The change from the previous year's score is statistically significant at the .05 level.
[1] Scores could range from 0 to 11.

STUDENT ATTRITION FROM CHOICE PROGRAMS

Employing a combination of focused group interviews, surveys, and school records, we examined student attrition from both school choice programs.

Private School Choice

Among families who used the CEO scholarship to transfer from public to private schools, the student dropout rate over the three-year period was 49.6 percent. Students were most likely to drop out of the program during their first year and when they moved from middle school to high school. Catholic students, students whose parents attended church more frequently, and students whose parents had attended a private school were significantly less likely to drop out of the CEO program. Our focus groups found that families whose child remained in the CEO program typically made the decision to send their child to religious school either before or shortly after the child was born. In contrast, parents of students who dropped out made their decision in response to frustration with public schools. Another factor that played a statistically significant role in the decision to drop out of the CEO program and return to the public schools was the location of the private school. Not surprisingly, children who had to travel further to their private school were more likely to drop out of the CEO program.

Almost all parents who moved their child from public to private schools thought that the CEO scholarship was too small. Although the CEO scholarship covered half of the tuition of the majority of San

Antonio's private elementary schools, it did not pay for uniforms, books, other supplies or transportation. For many of these parents, these extra costs proved too great to sustain. In addition, transportation to the private schools proved to be a greater problem than parents expected. Our data suggest that the CEO program could have reduced dropouts by providing a subsidy for transportation and by insuring that parents knew the full costs of private schooling prior to accepting the CEO scholarship.

Public School Choice

The multilingual program also has a high dropout rate. Roughly one-third of the students who enter the SAISD multilingual choice program leave during the first three years and only one-third stay for all seven years. We examined possible factors that encourage student retention by comparing students who remain in the program at least one year with students who drop out during their first year. Three variables strongly affect student retention in the public choice program: 1) The student's participation in the decision to join the multilingual program, 2) Whether the student's closest friend attends the same school, and 3) The student's standardized math score. Using the three factors, we could correctly predict who would remain in the program with 79 percent accuracy.

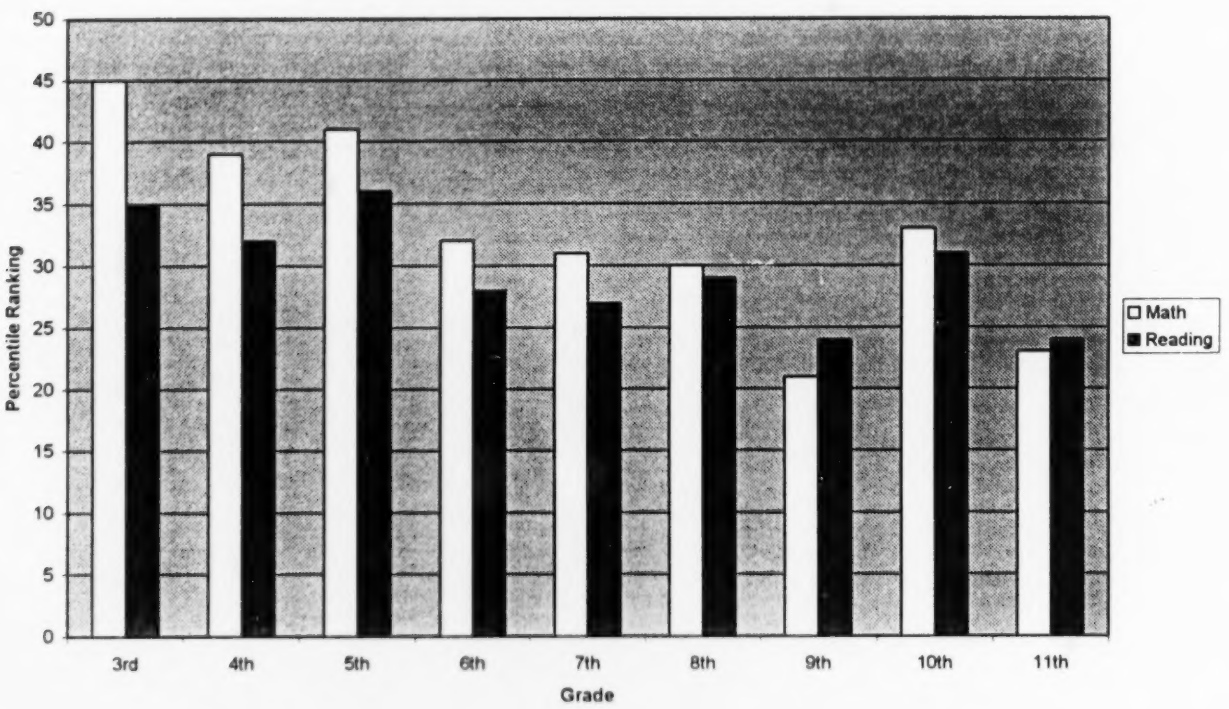
Our findings suggest students should be closely involved in the choice to participate in the multilingual program. The importance of friendship ties for middle school and high school students indicate that when a student must move to a new school and leave his or her past friends, the student should be highly motivated to participate and should believe that he or she made the decision to participate. Finally, math rather than reading scores better predict program retention. This may be the case because the reading scores are not measuring academic ability as much as they are indicating whether English is spoken in the student's home. Existing research on standardized tests indicates that math tests have higher validity than reading tests for students whose first language is not English.

IMPACT OF SCHOOL CHOICE ON STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

As indicated earlier in this report, SAISD discontinued using a nationally normed test for its students in 1993, and the CEO program did not enforce its requirement of standardized testing for its scholarship students. These factors make comparisons between public and private school students difficult. SAISD helped overcome this problem by providing 1992 test results for all students in grades three through eleven. Figure 1 shows these data. As you can see, in the third grade the average math and reading rankings for SAISD students were the 45th and 35th percentile respectively. By the eleventh grade, the average scores had fallen to the 23rd and 24th percentile. These results are consistent with our own findings for SAISD test scores. At almost every grade level, the average standardized test score for SAISD attendance-zone students dropped from 1992 to 1993.

We have shown elsewhere that, after controlling for past academic performance and socioeconomic

Figure 1:
SAISD Test Scores



and demographic characteristics of the students, students in both public choice and private schools have more positive changes in test scores than do students in attendance-zone schools (Martinez *et al.* 1995, 1996). However, as Table 5 shows, the inner-city environment of San Antonio is not conducive to educational achievement. None of the four groups does particularly well, and the students who fare worst are those who applied to the multilingual program and were rejected.[7]

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[7] Perhaps the most difficult problem in school choice research deals with selection bias. Families who participate in choice programs differ in many respects from families who do not, and we cannot capture the impacts of all differences through statistical controls. For example, assume that we have two families living next door to one another in an apartment building. Parents in the two families are of the same ethnicity and have similar jobs, educations, and incomes. In addition, the children in the families have similar academic abilities. Yet, if parents in one family spend time and money searching for the best educational opportunities for their child while the other parents

Table 5: Middle School Students' Changes In Math and Reading Scores from 1992 to 1993

	CEO Private School	Enrolled in Multilingual Program	Rejected by Multilingual Program	Public Attendance-Zone School
Change in Math	-.06	-1.17	-4.49	-2.11
Change in Reading	+2.14	+1.16	-3.67	- .16
Total Number	70	306	51	433

We have standardized test scores for 263 CEO students in the baseline academic year. The high dropout rate from the CEO program and the failure of many private schools to continue giving nationally normed standardized tests reduced the number of students for whom we have baseline and final year standardized test scores to 88. For these few students, the average percentile rankings improved over the entire period by .79 in math and .35 in reading. In other words, after four years in the private schools, there essentially was no difference in test scores. As the students who remained in the CEO program may not be comparable to those who dropped out, to generalize from the 88 students to other populations is risky.

To overcome the limitation created by the small number of cases for whom we have 1991-92 scores and 1995-96 scores, we counted each year for which a student had both that year's score and the previous year's test score as separate cases. For example, the scores of a student who received a CEO scholarship in the fourth grade, remained in the program all four years, and took a nationally normed test each year would constitute four cases. Counting each year's change as a case gives us more than 700 observations for both math and reading. Because schools do not give standardized tests until the third grade, students who first received a CEO scholarship in the second grade could not have a change in test scores until the final two years of our study. Students who began the first grade in 1992 could have a score only for the last year of the program. The drawbacks of this procedure are that cases and their error terms are not independent, older students receive greater weight than younger students, and students who remain in the program count

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do not, then the two families differ in a way that is likely to affect their children's educational achievements. Our study suffers from at least two types of selection bias. First, choosers are different from nonchoosers in ways that are not completely captured by controls for socioeconomic and demographic characteristics. Second, those who were rejected by the multilingual program may have differed in teachers' expectations for success. Therefore, even though both those accepted and those rejected are "choosers," there may be unmeasured differences between the two groups.

more than those who dropped out. The advantages are that it includes students who dropped out after the first year, and it increases the number of cases by more than 800 percent. Using this procedure, we find that, on average, for each year a student is in the program, the student's percentile ranking drops by .12 in math and increases by .44 in reading. Neither the test score results for the multilingual program nor those for private school students are substantively significant until we compare them with the substantial drop in test scores that occurs for SAISD attendance-zone students. Figure 1 showed that SAISD students, on average, lose 2 percentile rankings per year in math and 1.4 rankings in reading for every year they remain in attendance-zone schools. In contrast, neither multilingual nor CEO students experience significant declines in test scores.

TEACHER SURVEY RESULTS

Teacher Characteristics

Table 6 shows that the characteristics of private school teachers included in our study are different from those of the public school teachers. Private school teachers are less likely to hold master's degrees or to be certified and more likely to have less than 5 years teaching experience. Average years of experience for public school teachers is 15.1, compared with 9.9 for private school teachers. Whether enhanced paper credentials and experience make SAISD teachers more effective in the classroom is not known.

Table 6: Teacher Credentials and Experience
(Numbers in percentages)

	Private Elementary	SAISD Elementary	Private Middle	SAISD Multilingual Middle	SAISD Attendance-Zone Middle
State Teacher Certification *	53	100	50	86	96
Master's Degree	12	30	18	51	44
Less Than 5 Years Experience	38	15	44	23	4
TOTAL RESPONSES	140	160	73	79	54

*The question asked respondents whether or not they are certified. It did not ask about temporary or provisional certification. Some teachers who fall into the latter category may have responded negatively.

SAISD public school teachers are more likely to be members of minority groups than are private school teachers. Forty-one percent of SAISD elementary teachers responding to our survey are Latino, compared with 16 percent of private elementary school teachers. At the middle school level, 25 percent of SAISD

teachers at the multilingual schools and 29 percent of teachers at attendance-zone schools say they are Latino. This compares with 21 percent at private middle schools.

Teachers' Assessment of School Climate

The vast majority of teachers at both private and SAISD public schools say that the goals and priorities are clearly stated at their schools and that the principal is committed to carrying them out. However, more private school teachers than public school teachers find the school learning environment conducive to student achievement. The least likely to say so are teachers at SAISD attendance-zone middle schools (see Table 7 below). The fact that all the students at these schools are assigned and many bring with them the multifarious problems associated with being adolescents in an urban community undoubtedly compromises the quality of the learning environment. While only 19 percent of private middle school teachers say they are not supported when they enforce the school's discipline rules, 61 percent of SAISD teachers at attendance-zone middle schools attest to lack of support.

Table 7: Teachers Reporting School Environment Not Conducive to Student Achievement
(Numbers in percentages)

	Private Elementary	SAISD Elementary	Private Middle	SAISD Multilingual Middle	SAISD Attendance-Zone Middle
Percentage Agreeing	9	28	11	22	59
TOTAL RESPONSES	140	160	73	79	54

Class Size

Class size varies considerably for private schools at both the elementary and middle school levels. By comparison, Texas state law mandates that public elementary schools have a teacher-student ratio of 1-to-22 and 90 percent of SAISD elementary teachers report classes with between 16 and 25 students. SAISD middle school classes are somewhat larger, primarily in the 21 to 30 range. Except for the multilingual program, classes are typically larger at SAISD middle schools than at CEO private middle schools. Nearly 60 percent of teachers in the multilingual program report classes of 20 or fewer students.

Homework

One striking finding from the teacher survey is the differing amounts of homework that students are expected to complete (see Table 8). Over 60 percent of teachers at private middle schools and at the multilingual middle schools say they assign between sixteen minutes and forty-five minutes of homework per class period. By comparison, two-thirds of the teachers at SAISD attendance-zone schools say they assign less than fifteen minutes of homework per class period. At the elementary school level, homework practices do not vary between public and private schools.

Table 8: Teachers Report Average Homework Assigned Per Class Period
(Numbers in percentages)

	Private Elementary	SAISD Elementary	Private Middle	SAISD Multilingual Middle	SAISD Attendance-Zone Middle
15 minutes or less	28	33	14	35	65
16-45 minutes	64	61	62	77	33
Over 45 minutes	8	7	8	3	2
TOTAL RESPONSES	140	160	73	79	54

Expectations for Student Performance

Expectations for student performance are much higher at private and multilingual schools than at attendance-zone schools in our study. Over two-thirds of teachers at these schools expect half or more of the students in their classes to exceed grade level or course objectives by the end of the year. This compares with 35 percent for SAISD attendance-zone middle school teachers and 43 percent for SAISD elementary school teachers.

Over half the teachers at private schools expect upwards of 90 percent of their students to reach grade level by the end of the year. The percentages of public school teachers who expect so range from one-fifth at SAISD elementary and multilingual schools to one-tenth at SAISD attendance-zone middle schools.

Teaching Values

The survey reveals a significant contrast between private and public school teachers in their values instruction, a matter of concern among critics of school choice. The majority of private school teachers say they teach the values their schools represent. By contrast, the majority of public school teachers say they encourage students to express their values and develop an appreciation for the values of other students (see Table 9). However, Catholic school teachers are much closer to their public school counterparts in the teaching of values with 64 percent reporting that they encourage values expression and tolerance. The percentages suggest that toleration for individual differences is more likely to be promoted in public schools than in private schools.

Table 9: Teachers Report Values Instruction*
(Numbers in percentages)

	Private Elementary	SAISD Elementary	Private Middle	SAISD Multilingual Middle	SAISD Attendance-Zone Middle
Teach values of school	56	15	66	17	24
Encourage values expression and tolerance	43	77	31	64	67
TOTAL RESPONSES	140	160	73	79	54

*Question asked teachers to choose one of the following: (1) I stick to teaching basic skills and facts and avoid values instruction, (2) I teach the values my school represents, (3) I encourage students to express their values and to develop an appreciation that others have different values.

Parental Involvement

At the elementary level, over half the teachers at private and public schools in our study say that parents visit their classes between two and four times a year. Visitation drops off at the middle school level. This is most apparent at SAISD attendance-zone middle schools, where over half the teachers say that parents do not visit at all.

Teachers at private schools are most likely to meet the majority of their students' parents. Teachers at attendance-zone middle schools are least likely to do so, with nearly half saying they do not (see Table 10). These responses coincide with the results of our parent surveys, which show that choosing parents take greater interest in the education of their children.

Table 10: Teachers Report No Contact With the Majority of Their Students' Parents
(Numbers in percentages)

	Private Elementary	SAISD Elementary	Private Middle	SAISD Multilingual Middle	SAISD Attendance-Zone Middle
	1	15	2	20	46
TOTAL RESPONSES	140	160	73	79	54

STUDENT SURVEY

Curriculum and Pedagogy

While the vast majority of students at all three types of schools agree with the statement, "I am receiving a good education," students at private and multilingual schools are more likely than students at attendance-zone schools to agree strongly. Of students attending the SAISD multilingual schools, those participating in the multilingual program are more likely to agree strongly than nonparticipants (43 percent versus 27 percent). In fact, the multilingual students are more likely to agree strongly than are private school students (43 percent versus 36 percent).

Roughly half of students in each of the three types of schools answered that their classes are easy. However, there was considerable disparity among respondents regarding the amount of homework teachers assign. Sixty-four percent of private school students say that their teachers assign a lot of homework, compared with 49 percent of the students at SAISD multilingual schools and only 34 percent of students at attendance-zone schools. Students at Catholic schools are much more likely to say their teachers assign a lot of homework (70 percent) than students at non-Catholic private schools (49 percent).

Climate and Order

We asked a series of questions about school climate. Included among them were whether students like their peers and their teachers, whether they find most of their work interesting, and whether their teachers help them when they have a problem. We also asked if their teachers make a positive difference in their lives. The pattern of response across all three types of schools was remarkably uniform. The majority of students are satisfied with their school. Multilingual and private school students are remarkably similar in their responses to all the school climate questions and generally express slightly higher levels of satisfaction

than attendance-zone students. For example, 83 percent of both multilingual participants and private school students say they like most of their classmates and 71 percent of both groups believe their teachers have made a positive difference in their lives. This compares with 68 percent and 60 percent, respectively, for students at SAISD attendance-zone middle schools. For nearly all the school climate questions, the responses of African American students at both SAISD multilingual and attendance-zone middle schools ranged between ten and twelve percentage points lower than Latino student responses.

There is less consensus among respondents about order at their school. Fighting appears to be a more significant problem at public schools than at private schools. As noted in our parent survey, discipline is a strong factor in motivating parents to seek an alternative to the attendance-zone middle school. Fifty-six percent of the students at attendance-zone middle schools and 35 percent of those at the multilingual schools believe fighting is a problem. Only 24 percent of private middle school students report a fighting problem.

In part, misbehavior is an attribute of maturation. Thus, for example, while 42 percent of sixth graders at the multilingual schools see fighting as a problem, only 26 percent of eighth graders feel similarly. The same pattern is found at attendance-zone middle schools and at private schools.

Related to the matter of discipline are school rules. Once again, respondents differ as to whether school rules are fair. Sixty-one percent of students at the multilingual schools think school rules are fair, compared with 56 percent of the private school students, and 44 percent of attendance-zone students. Interestingly, Latinos students are twice as likely as African American students to agree that school rules are fair at SAISD schools.

Once again, grade level differences are also apparent, with eighth graders least likely to agree that school rules are fair. For example, while 68 percent of private school sixth graders say that the rules at their school are fair, 53 percent of eighth graders concur. Thus, regardless of the type of school they attend, students are more likely to challenge the existing system of order as they approach adolescence.

In summary, students at the attendance-zone public middle schools and younger students in each type of school are most likely to feel that fighting is a problem in their schools. Attendance-zone students are also least likely to feel their school rules are fair.

Parent Involvement

Ninety-five percent of students at all three types of schools say their parents expect them to get good grades in school. However, private school students are more likely to say that their parents have met and talked with their teachers; 91 percent compared with 59 percent at multilingual schools and 51 percent at attendance-zone schools.

Values Stressed in Classes

We asked students to indicate how often specific values were addressed in their classes. The values were rephrased in parlance that middle school students could understand. The survey items and their value designations are:

Item	Value Addressed
Knowing right from wrong	Moral
Community pride	Social
Cultural/ethnic pride	Social
How to get along with people	Social
Family pride	Social
Religious beliefs	Spiritual
Knowing the importance of learning	Educational
Developing pride in yourself	Personal
Responsibilities of being a citizen	Civic
Living in a democracy	Civic

The survey asked whether each item was addressed "often," "sometimes," or "never."

Figure 2 below tracks the percentage of students at the three types of schools indicating items as addressed "often" in the instructional program. As the chart demonstrates, the perceived emphasis each of the values receives at the three different types of schools is remarkably similar -- except for religion. Nearly 80 percent of private school students say that religion is addressed often in their classes. By contrast, public school students list it as the least addressed. Other than religion, the private school students list knowing the importance of learning as the second most often addressed at their schools. This value receives the highest designation by public school students. Seventy percent of students at all three types of schools say this value is often addressed in their classes. Students perceive the moral value of knowing right from wrong as more often addressed at private schools (67 percent) than at either multilingual (56 percent) or attendance-zone school (58 percent). The social value of getting along with others is addressed as frequently in the private schools as it is in the public schools -- half say it is discussed often in class. While citizenship responsibilities receives about the same instructional emphasis at all schools (40 percent), the civic value of living in a democracy is addressed more often at the private schools (31 percent) than at either the multilingual or attendance-zone public schools (19 percent and 24 percent, respectively).[8]

The pattern of responses to the value items differed little by Latino and African American ethnicity, by gender, or by grade level. Catholic school students perceived higher levels of emphasis for most of the items than their non-Catholic private school counterparts. This was particularly true for getting along with others

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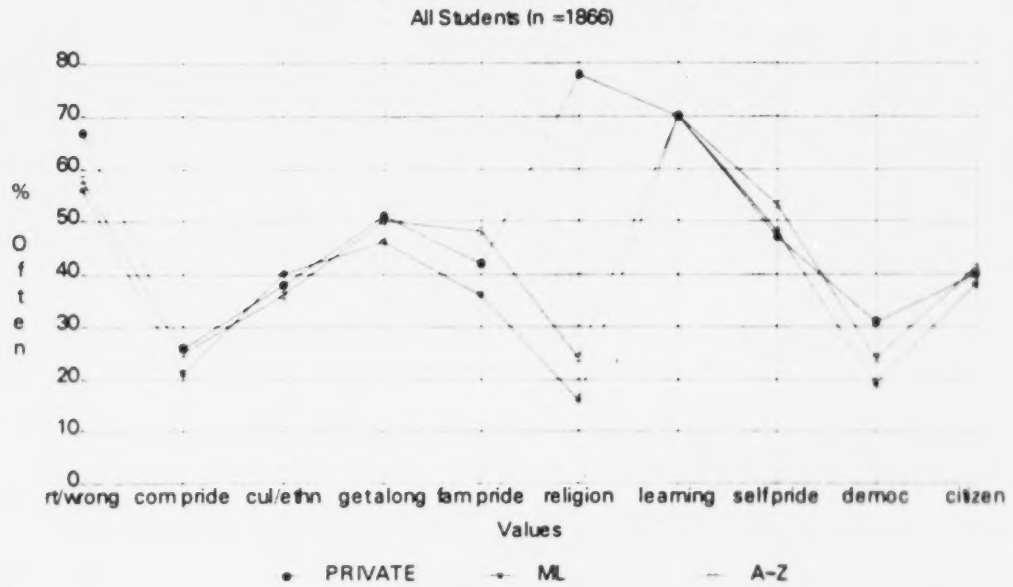
[8]Students' perceptions of values stressed in the curriculum do not necessarily translate into student attitudes and behaviors. Our latest research explores how students learn and apply values information. Findings will be incorporated in our forthcoming book, Vouchers for the Poor: Policy Issues in School Choice.

(57 percent versus 38 percent saying addressed often), pride in one's self (53 percent versus 33 percent), family pride (47 percent versus 28 percent), cultural/ethnic pride (43 percent versus 26 percent), and community pride (33 percent versus 10 percent). About 70 percent of non-Catholic private school students say that knowing right from wrong, religious beliefs, and importance of learning are addressed often in their classes.

FIGURE 2
VALUE EMPHASIS IN CLASSES



Note: The value designations represented by the abbreviations on the horizontal axis in the chart are: knowing right from wrong, community pride, cultural/ethnic pride, getting along with people, family pride, religious beliefs, importance of learning, developing pride in yourself, living in a democracy, and responsibilities of being a citizen. Also, PRIVATE = private schools, ML = multilingual schools, and A-Z = attendance-zone schools.

These findings suggest that concern expressed by critics of publicly funded voucher systems that private schools will not teach the democratic values necessary for effective citizenship may be misplaced. At the same time, the pervasive influence of religion in the instructional program at private schools supports contentions that allowing publicly funded vouchers for private sectarian schools inevitably will promote religion. Government support for religion poses problems under the anti-establishment provisions of both federal and state constitutions.

SUMMARY

A central finding of this research is that program design has great bearing on the consequences of school choice programs. The SAISD multilingual program has a positive effect on student test score performance and on both student and family satisfaction. At the same time, the program adversely affects students who apply but are not admitted and has a high attrition rate. It also skims off the best students from attendance-zone schools, raising questions regarding the quality of the education for those left behind. The CEO scholarship program gives parents a broader choice of schooling for the education of their children and raises their satisfaction levels. But the limit of the scholarship to 50 percent of tuition coupled with lack of transportation reimbursement results in high attrition. Changes in the design and implementation of these choice programs could ameliorate many of these negative consequences.

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